

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7792

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 283

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, SHUM, CI

SUBJECT: FRAUD IN CHILEAN PLEBISCITE: UNLIKELY BUT STILL AN  
OPEN ISSUE

1. SUMMARY. THE EMBASSY'S JUDGMENT IS THAT PINOCHET'S VICTORY  
IN THE JANUARY 4 PLEBISCITE WAS DUE PRIMARILY TO FACTORS  
NOT INVOLVING LARGE-SCALE FRAUD. RESPONDING TO OBVIOUS IMPERATIVES  
THE GOC IS CLAIMING THAT THE PROCEDURES WERE PRISTINE PURE,  
WHILE THE OPPOSITION (PRIMARILY CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS - PDC)  
CLAIMS FRAUD. THE ONLY NON-INVOLVED OBSERVERS, THE INTERNATIONAL  
PRESS WHICH WAS HERE IN RECORD NUMBERS (OVER 200), REPORTED THE  
COUNT AT THE POLLS IN SANTIAGO AS GENERALLY HONEST AND FILED  
ACCORDINGLY. MASSIVE FRAUD AT THE VOTING TABLES WOULD PROBABLY  
HAVE BEEN REPORTED IMMEDIATELY. LATER JUGGLING OF THE NUMBERS  
WOULD HAVE BEEN EASIER TO DO BUT DIFFICULT TO HIDE INDEFINITELY.  
IN SHORT, WHILE WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE YET TO CORROBORATE ALLEGATIONS  
OF SUBSTANTIAL FRAUD, WE CANNOT WRITE OFF THE POSSIBILITY.  
WITHOUT NORMAL ELECTORAL SAFEGUARDS, UNCERTAINTY WILL PERSIST.  
END SUMMARY.

2. IN PREVIOUS REPORTING THE EMBASSY HAS TOUCHED UPON A NUMBER  
OF DECISIVE FACTORS AND LOADING THE PLEBISCITE IN THE GOVERNMENT'S  
FAVOR, AND RENDERING UNNECESSARY MECHANICAL FRAUD. HERE WE  
ADDRESS ONLY THE QUESTION OF WHETHER IRRIGULARITIES IN THE  
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COUNTING OF THE VOTE ACTUALLY OCCURRED AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE,  
IF ANY.

3. THE GOC AND A VARIETY OF ITS SUPPORTERS ARE RECOUNTING VIGNETTES  
EMPHASIZING THE PRISTINE PURITY OF THE VOTING PROCEDURES. THE  
GOVERNMENT HAS SAID THAT COMMUNITY-BY-COMMUNITY BREAKDOWNS OF  
THE RESULTS WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE EVENTUALLY; SO FAR, THEY HAVE

NOT APPEARED. THE AGGREGATED DATA AND A FEW SUBREGIONAL TOTALS RELEASED BY THE GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, ARE ROUGHLY CONSISTENT. THE TRADITIONAL CONSERVATIVE STRONGHOLDS IN RURAL AREAS AND IN SOUTHERN CHILE GAVE PINOCHET MUCH HIGHER MAJORITIES. CHILE'S HISTORICALLY MOST CONSERVATIVE PROVINCE, CAUTIN, GAVE PINOCHET HIS HIGHEST PERCENTAGE. THE WORKING CLASS DISTRICTS OF SANTIAGO REGISTERED THE LOWEST "YES" VOTE.

4. NOT SURPRISINGLY, CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND OTHER OPPONENTS OF THE GOC INSIST THAT FRAUD INVOLVED 10-15 PERCENT OF THE RESULTS. THEY SAY THAT THEY ARE PUTTING TOGETHER A "WHITE PAPER" WHICH WILL BE A COMPENDIUM OF ALLEGATIONS OF IRREGULARITIES AT POLLING PLACES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THE PDC CLAIMS THAT IN LOWER CLASS SAN MIGUEL, FOR EXAMPLE, THEIR INFORMAL POLL WATCHERS FOUND TABLE AFTER TABLE COMING IN WITH A 50 PERCENT "NO" VOTE. BUT SAN MIGUEL AS A WHOLE, THEY SAY, SUPPOSEDLY HAD ONLY A 30 PERCENT "NO" VOTE. PDCERS CLAIM THAT VIRTUALLY ALL TABLES WERE CONTROLLED BY GOVERNMENT LOYALISTS AND CITE NUMEROUS ALLEGATIONS THAT THE TABLE OFFICIALS WERE TOLD IN ADVANCE THE VOTE THEY WERE TO PRODUCE. THE PDC ALSO ASSERTS THAT AT MANY TABLES OFFICIALS THREW IN ADDITIONAL BALLOTS IN ORDER TO INCREASE THE "YES" VOTE. IN SOME CASES A TABLE WOULD REPORT A TOTAL OF 450 BALLOTS WHEN ACCORDING TO THE RULES EACH TABLE WAS TO HAVE BEEN LIMITED TO 350 BALLOTS. FURTHERMORE, THE PDC ALLEGES THAT AT VARIOUS TIERS IN THE TALLYING PROCESS THE GOVERNMENT INFLATED THE "YES" VOTE. THE PDC ASSERTS THAT A TRUE COUNT WOULD SHOW 60 PERCENT FOR THE

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GOVERNMENT, 40 PERCENT OPPOSED. OTHER OPPOSITION GROUPS SUCH AS THE SPLINTERED UP PARTIES APPEAR TO BE FOLLOWING A SIMILAR LINE, AS DOES RADIO MOSCOW.

5. THE ONLY NON-INVOLVED OBSERVERS OF THE VOTING PROCESS WERE THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES. PRESS AND TELEVISION PERSONS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD PULLED INTO CHILE IN LARGE NUMBERS TO OBSERVE THE VOTING; OVER 200 CAME. MANY PRESS PERSONS ORGANIZED THEIR OWN TEAMS TO CHECK THE ACTIVITY AT THE VOTING TABLES. INTERNATIONAL MEDIA PEOPLE REPORTED THE COUNT AT THE POLLS IN SANTIAGO AS GENERALLY HONEST AND FILED THEIR STORIES ACCORDINGLY. ONE U.S. MEDIA REPRESENTATIVE WHO HAS MADE NO SECRET OF HIS ANTI-GOC VIEWS MANAGED A POLL-WATCHING OPERATION IN SEVERAL SANTIAGO WORKING CLASS SUBURBS. HE TOLD US THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS PLAYING IT STRAIGHT AT THE VOTING TABLES.

6. THE MOST IMPORTANT SINGLE CIRCUMSTANCE ALLOWING FOR ALLEGATIONS THAT MASSIVE FRAUD OCCURRED IS THE AD HOC VOTING TABLES. ACCORDING TO THE GOC, THERE WERE NEARLY 25,000 VOTING TABLES, 9,000 IN SANTIAGO ALONE. THE INITIAL COUNT AT THESE POLLING PLACES WAS TO HAVE OCCURRED IN PUBLIC. IN MOST CASES IT DID SO; IN SOME CASES IT DID NOT. IN ANY EVENT, IT WAS MARKEDLY DIFFICULT FOR

OBSERVERS FROM THE PRESS (OFFICIALLY AUTHORIZED) AND POLL-WATCHING GROUPS FROM VARIOUS POLITICAL PARTIES (NOT OFFICIALLY AUTHORIZED BUT APPARENTLY THERE) TO COVER A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF POLLING PLACES. RESULTS FROM VOTING TABLES WERE CONVEYED TO THE SENIOR OFFICIAL PRESENT (AN OFFICER FROM ONE OF THE ARMED SERVICES), AND THEN COMMUNICATED BY PHONE TO THE NEAREST MUNICIPALITY

FROM THIS POINT ON, THERE WAS NO PUBLIC SCRUTINY OF THE PROCESS. THE MUNICIPALITY PASSED ITS RETURNS TO THE REGIONAL GOVERNOR, AND HE IN TURN TRANSMITTED THEM TO THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND THE COUNT WENT QUICKLY; THE GOC ANNOUNCED 95 PERCENT TALLIED BY MIDNIGHT. MEANWHILE, UNUSED BALLOTS AND THE REGISTRY OF VOTERS AT EACH TABLE HAVE NOW BEEN ACCUMULATED AT VARIOUS PLACES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AND THERE IS NO PLAN FOR A RECOUNT OF THE

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RESULTS. THUS, IT IS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO VOUCHSAFE THE PURITY OF THE COUNT.

7. COMMENT: IN ANALYZING THE FRAUD ISSUE, IT SHOULD BE KEPT IN MIND THAT VOTING MANIPULATION WOULD HAVE HAD TO HAVE BEEN MASSIVE TO HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANT. FOR EXAMPLE, FRAUD AT THE VOTING TABLES TO BE SIGNIFICANT WOULD HAVE REQUIRED SWITCHING 550,000 "NO" VOTES TO "YES." THIS IN TURN WOULD HAVE REQUIRED THE PROCEDURAL SCURRYING AROUND IN SWITCHING BALLOTS AND CHANGING REGISTRATIONS IN 22 INSTANCES AT EACH OF THE NATION'S 25,000 VOTING TABLES. WE DOUBT THAT THIS COULD HAVE BEEN DONE ON SUCH A SCALE WITHOUT THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS TUMBLING TO IT OR THE OPPOSITION PUTTING OUT EVIDENCE OF SUCH ACTIVITY THE NIGHT OF JANUARY 4. LOOKING AT FRAUD POSSIBILITIES ANOTHER WAY, EVEN IF THE GOC INFLATED THE VOTE SIMPLY BY ADDING ONE MILLION ADDITIONAL "YESES," THIS WOULD HAVE ONLY INCREASED PINOCHET'S MAJORITY FROM 68 TO THE REPORTED 75 PERCENT. THE OBVIOUS CONCLUSION IS THAT THE AMOUNT OF FRAUD NEEDED TO SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT THE OUTCOME OF THE "CONSULTA" WOULD HAVE HAD TO HAVE BEEN ENORMOUS. THE BASIC PRESUMPTION IS THAT SUCH MASSIVE MANIPULATION AT THE VOTING TABLES WOULD HAVE COME TO LIGHT IMMEDIATELY. IF MANIPULATION ON THIS SCALE OCCURRED IN A LATER STAGE IN THE VOTING TALLY, THE PRESUMPTION IS THAT IT WOULD HAVE COME TO LIGHT BY NOW. IF NOTHING ELSE, GENERAL LEIGH'S AND ADMIRAL MERINO'S LOYAL OFFICERS, CONSCIOUS THAT A BIG WIN BY PINOCHET WOULD PREJUDICE THE INTERESTS OF THEIR COUNTRY AND SERVICES, WOULD NOT HAVE ALLOWED PINOCHET TO GET AWAY WITH SIMPLY ADDING A MILLION "YES" VOTES.

8. IN SPITE OF THE ABOVE, THE FRAUD ISSUE WILL REMAIN ALIVE BECAUSE THE GOC DID NOT PROVIDE PUBLIC CONTROLS AT EVERY STAGE IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS. GIVEN THE ABSENCE OF SUCH CONTROLS, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE GOC TO PROVE THE NEGATIVE: THAT FRAUD

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ON THE SCALE CLAIMED COULD NOT HAVE OCCURRED. OUR BOTTIM LINE  
JUDGMENT IS THAT SOME FRAUD UNDOBTEDLY OCCURRED BUT NOT ON THE  
MASSIVE SCALE ASSERTED OTHER FACTORS HAD A MUCH GREATER IMPACT  
ON THE JANUARY 4 VOTE, A MATTTTER WHICH WILL BE THE SUBJECT OF  
A SEPARATE TELEGRAM.  
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## Message Attributes

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